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Episcopalians Wary Of CIA

BURLINGTON — Representatives at the annual convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont took a firm stand Saturday against the Central Intelligence Agency's use of church workers for intelligence gathering purposes. They also expressed concern about the possible cut-off of the federal food stamp program.

The convention unanimously endorsed a resolution denouncing the use of church workers as undercover agents or information sources for CIA activities and asked Vermont's Congressional delegation to propose an amendment to a Senate bill that would liberalize the charter for the spy agency.

The proposed charter would loosen restrictions on covert activities, as well as use of journalists, academicians and church personnel in intelligence gathering operations.

One minister, whose name was not available, said during the discussion of the resolution that he

had been approached by an intelligence agent who requested he provide the agency with information. The minister told the convention it was his experience that it is better not to become involved with intelligence gathering operations.

The convention felt it "crucial" that church workers not be used by the CIA or other intelligence organizations to preserve the "climate of confidentiality" offered by the church and its workers, said Christine Hemenway, communications coordinator for the diocese.

"There is a separation of church and state, and that separation must be respected and the confidence must not be violated," Hemenway said.

Despite the possibility that the CIA might use church workers to good ends, Hemenway said the convention's feeling was that the "end does not justify the means."

Another resolution, on world

peace, called for at-home reconciliation among all persons to offset the current political climate of "tension and a war-like spirit." It, too, was approved.

Resolutions on peace, hunger and food, a workshop on ecumenism and the bishop's call to respond to the needs of the homeless, hungry and confused people in the world set the tone for annual convention, which met Friday and Saturday at St. Paul's Cathedral in Burlington.

In his keynote address, the Right Rev. Robert S. Kerr, Bishop of Vermont, told the convention, "Charity at a distance is not enough," and challenged the diocese not only to provide financial help but to sponsor refugee families.

In response to the possible cutoff of federal food stamps beginning June 1, the convention passed a resolution that pointed out the duty to support the hungry with food shelves and money.